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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/546,214	04/10/2000	Atsushi Watanabe	392.1680/JDH	3614
21171	7590	12/14/2005	EXAMINER	
STAAS & HALSEY LLP SUITE 700 1201 NEW YORK AVENUE, N.W. WASHINGTON, DC 20005			LE, VU.	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2613	

DATE MAILED: 12/14/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/546,214	WATANABE ET AL.
	Examiner Vu Le	Art Unit 2613

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 August 2004.
 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-9 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 1-9 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
 6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-9 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishida et al, US 4,680,802 in view of Greenspan, US 6,026,189.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Re claims 1-9, the grounds for rejection as set forth in the last Office Action still apply here. The newly added limitation of "a plurality of stacked objects, each having identical three-dimensional shapes but different position and postures" in independent

claim 1 does not overcome the teaching disclosure of Nishida et al for the following reasons.

Firstly, Applicant's contention that Nishida et al deals with 2-D component parts is not correct. The previous Examiner fails to recognize that the component parts in Nishida et al are actually 3-D component parts. Although Nishida et al does not explicitly use the terminology "three-dimensional" per se, ample disclosure provides evidence of three-dimensional consideration. For example, the consideration of a component part's position (i.e. two dimensions) and posture (i.e. third dimension) is *prima facie* case of three-dimensional consideration of said component part (see col. 2, line 14-27). In the cited segment, the component part's position and posture must be ascertained for robotic manipulation or pick-up of said part. For a successful robotic pick-up of said part, knowledge of roll, pitch, and yaw angles is necessitated.

Secondly, in Nishida et al, the component parts are arbitrarily positioned in a feeder (1), hence these parts are in effect "stacked" in said feeder.

Thirdly, requiring identically shaped component parts as now claimed as opposed to arbitrarily shaped parts as disclosed in Nishida et al is non-distinct. In Nishida et al, because component parts are arbitrarily shaped, a shape of each component must first be determined before position and posture can be ascertained (see fig. 3, col. 2, line 40 – col. 3, line 13). When the component parts are identically shaped as claimed, this step may be skipped and only the position and posture of the parts are necessary for the eventual robotic pick-up.

Although it is viewed by this examiner that the Greenspan patent is not necessary to obviate 3-D shape determination of an object as claimed, its explicit disclosure establishes *prima facie* case of obviousness about 3-D shape recognition of object which is not expressly disclosed in the Nishida et al patent. The 103 rejection of claims 1-9 is based on Nishida et al and Greenspan as a whole.

Contact

4. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Vu Le whose telephone number is (571) 272-7332. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:30-6:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mehrdad Dastouri can be reached on (571) 272-7418. Customer Service can be reached at (571) 272-2600. The fax number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vu Le".